

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T STATE 148528

NODIS

TO THE AMBASSADOR

FOLLOWING REPEAT CAIRO 10528 ACTION SECSTATE JUNE 23.

QUOTE S E C R E T CAIRO 10528

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EG, US, LY

SUBJECT: FURTHER EGYPTIAN REACTION TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S MESSAGE TO
SADAT ON SOVIET MESSAGE RE EGYPTIAN/LIBYAN INTENTIONS

REFS: (A) STATE 095802, (B) CAIRO 7324

SUMMARY: MINSTATE MOHAMED RIAD SUGGESTED PRESIDENT CARTER'S

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EARLIER ORAL MESSAGE TO SADAT INTERPRETED HERE AS URGING GOE
TO MEND ITS FENCES WITH SOVIETS. THUS, IT WAS INDIRECTLY
RESPONSIBLE FOR FAHMY'S VISIT TO MOSCOW. AMBASSADOR POINTED
OUT ANY SUCH SUGGESTION FAR-FETCHED. MESSAGE OFFERED NO
ADVICE ON DEALING WITH SOVIETS. EGYPTIANS DID NOT ASK US
TO COMMENT ON PROPOSED VISIT, NOR DID WE SEEK DO SO. IN
CONTRAST OUR EFFORTS KEEP EGYPTIANS BRIEFED ON OUR TALKS

WITH SOVIETS RE MIDDLE EAST, FAHMY HAS RECIPROCATED VERY SKIMPILY. HOWEVER, PRESIDENT'S BRIEFING HAD BEEN MUCH APPRECIATED AND HELPFUL. FAHMY CONTINUES BE RETICENT TELL US ABOUT HIS DEALINGS WITH SOVIETS. AMBASSADOR HAS REMINDED HIM SEVERAL TIMES THAT COOPERATION IS TWO-WAY STREET AND THAT WE HAVE DONE OUR SHARE. SOVIETS HAVE AROUSED FAHMY'S SUSPICIONS THAT WE ARE TELLING THEM A GREAT DEAL MORE ABOUT OUR NEGOTIATING POSITIONS THAN WE ADMIT TO EGYPT. THERE IS ALSO WIDESPREAD SPECULATION LOCALLY THAT USG IS SEEKING PREVENT ANY NORMALIZATION OF EGYPTIAN/SOVIET RELATIONS, WHICH FAHMY HAS SOUGHT COUNTER BY CLAIMING USG ENCOURAGING GOE IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS. END SUMMARY.

1. REF B REPORTED FAHMY'S INITIAL REACTION WHEN I DELIVERED PRESIDENT CARTER'S EARLIER ORAL MESSAGE TO SADAT ON THE SOVIET MESSAGE RE LIBYA. SADAT HAS NEVER MENTIONED THE SUBJECT, ALTHOUGH FAHMY HAS ON OCCASION ALLUDED TO THE MESSAGE AS NOT HAVING BEEN VERY HELPFUL. EVERY TIME HE HAS DONE SO, I HAVE REJECTED THIS DESCRIPTION. I HAVE REMINDED HIM THAT HE HAD NOT ASKED ANYTHING SPECIFIC FROM US WHEN SENDING SADAT'S ORAL MESSAGE ON THE SOVIET MEMORANDUM (CAIRO 7065). IN TYPICAL FAHMY FASHIPN, HE HAS SIMPLY GRUMBLED THAT WE ARE NOT AS ALIVE TO THE SOVIET THREAT IN AFRICA AS WE SHOULD BE.

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2. AT DINNER TWO EVENINGS AGO WITH MINSTATE MOHAMMED RIAD, HE RAISED SUBJECT AND SOUGHT TO CONNECT PRESIDENT CARTER'S MESSAGE WITH FAHMY'S TRIP TO MOSCOW. OUR MESSAGE, HE CLAIMED, HAD BEEN INTERPRETED BY TOP EGYPTIAN LEADERSHIP AS URGING GOE TO MEND ITS FENCES WITH THE SOVIETS. BOTH FAHMY AND HE HAD SO INTERPRETED IT AND HAD MADE THIS POINT TO SADAT. IT HAD BEEN USEFUL IN GETTING A RELUCTANT SADAT TO AGREE TO FAHMY'S URGINGS THAT A NEW EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS. OUT OF THIS HAD COME IN DUE COURSE THE FAHMY VISIT TO MOSCOW.

3. I REMINDED RIAD THAT OUR MESSAGE HAD SPECIFICALLY STATED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD NOT PRESUME TO ADVISE SADAT ON HIS DEALINGS WITH THE SOVIETS AND TRUSTED SADAT'S JUDGMENT. WE HAD ALSO OPINED SOVIETS WOULD END UP "WISER BUT SADDER" FROM THE AFFAIR. WE HAD INDEED EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT SITUATION WOULD BE RESOLVED WITHOUT ADVERSELY AFFECTING OUR MUTUAL OBJECTIVE OF WORKING FOR EARLY RECONVENING OF GENEVA CONFERENCE. HOWEVER, SUGGESTION THAT FAHMY'S DECISION TO GO TO MOSCOW ATTRIBUTABLE TO OUR ORAL MESSAGE WAS A BIT

FAR-FETCHED.

4. DECISION MAKE THE VISIT WAS CLEARLY SOLELY AN EGYPTIAN ONE. AT NO TIME WERE WE ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED VISIT. NOR DID WE SEEK TO OFFER ANY GRATUITIOUS ADVICE. AS A MATTER FACT, I HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT SURPRISED THAT FAHMY MADE NO EFFORT TO TELL US ABOUT THE PROPOSED VISIT TO MOSCOW. THOUGH THIS WAS HIS RIGHT, IT WAS HARDLY CONSISTENT WITH PRESIDENT SADAT'S EXPRESS STATEMENT TO ME PRIOR TO THE MOSCOW TRIP THAT WE MUST CONSULT CLOSELY ON OUR RESPECTIVE DEALINGS WITH THE SOVIETS ON THE MIDDLE EAST. ON OUR PART, WE HAD DONE SO. WE HAD RESPONDED TO FAHMY'S REQUEST FOR SOME PRIOR INDICATION OF WHAT SECRETARY
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VANCE INTENDED TO DISCUSS WITH MOSCOW IN GENEVA AND SUBSEQUENTLY PROVIDED A BRIEFING ON THE ME PORTIONS OF THE VANCE/GROMYKO TALKS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THEY HAD FINISHED. FAHMY HAD GIVEN ME A CURSORY ACCOUNT OF THE MOSCOW TALKS, BUT FIRST REAL BRIEFING WE HAD ON THEM HAD COME FROM PRESIDENT SADAT THE PREVIOUS DAY. THE PRESIDENT'S ACTION IN DOING SO WAS MUCH APPRECIATED AND WAS HELPFUL TO US.

5. COMMENT: I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER FAHMY WAS AWARE IN ADVANCE THAT SADAT WOULD BRIEF ME ON MOSCOW TALKS. WITHOUT WANTING TO READ MORE INTO IT THAN IS WARRANTED, FAHMY CONTINUES TO BE RETICENT IN TELLING US ABOUT HIS DEALINGS WITH THE SOVIETS. I HAVE REMINDED HIM IN FRIENDLY FASHION SEVERAL TIMES THAT COOPERATION IS A TWOAWAY STREET AND THAT WE HAVE DONE OUR PART. FAHMY REMAINS CONVINCED THAT WE HAVE TOLD SOVIETS MORE ON OUR ME PLANS THAN WE ADMIT TO THE EGYPTIANS. I HAVE SOUGHT TO DISABUSE HIM OF THIS NOTION, BUT THE SOVIETS OBVIOUSLY PUT ON A GOOD LINE IN CLAIMING TO KNOW A GREAT DEAL ABOUT OUR NEGOTIATING POSITIONS. THEY SUCCEED IN INDUCING ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY IN FAHMY'S MIND AND AROUSE HIS LATENT SUSPICIONS. SUGGESTION THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S ORAL MESSAGE TO SADAT CATALYZED FAHMY TRIP TO MOSCOW IS A NEW WRINKLE. IT IS PARTLY AN APOLOGIA, BUT ALSO FITS BYZANTINE EGYPTIAN THINKING PROCESSES.

6. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, THERE IS ALSO WIDESPREAD SPECULATION LOCALLY THAT USG IS SEEKING PREVENT ANY NORMALIZATION OF EGYPTIAN/SOVIET RELATIONS; FAHMY HAS SOUGHT TO COUNTER THIS BY CLAIMING WE ARE ENCOURAGING GOE IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS. SINCE RIAD IS CLOSE TO FAHMY AND MAY BE EXPECTED TO PASS ON
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ANY COMMENTS, I THOUGHT IT BEST TO SPEAK FRANKLY TO HIM.
EILTS UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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